

Coalition for a Sustainable Delta: Recommend Elimination of striped bass bag and size limits to Fish and Game Commission

Staff Recommendation: No action at this time.

Council should approach predation and Delta Stressors comprehensively.

Background

The applicant has requested that the Delta Stewardship Council ask the Fish and Game Commission to eliminate its striped bass bag and size limits. It appears that federal and state agencies have been working through this issue and will eventually come to a decision on the striped bass bag and size limits based on facts and science after going through their process and will have recommendations at some point in the future.

Should the applicant have specific issues with the oversight agencies' actions or decisions, the applicant is encouraged to interact with the specific agency. The request cannot be achieved in a short period, nor is it among the specified duties of the Council under the provisions of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Reform Act of 2009 (SBX7 1). Full authority in the matter rests with the Commission.

The applicant has stated that CEQA is not necessary. The requested Council recommendation may not be subject to CEQA, but the subsequent action to eliminate striped bass bag and size limits could be subject to CEQA including a federal nexus to NEPA. The lead agency would need to make the appropriate CEQA determination

The applicant has stated that there would be no cost resulting from the recommendation. However, associated costs including the desired outcome may have fiscal impacts to the associated agencies depending on the process they would go through to eliminate striped bass bag and size limits (e.g., further studies and documentation). The performance measure of the early action should be based on increasing salmon and other sensitive species populations not simply the elimination of bag and size limits as stated in the application.

Applicant's scientific justification included an attachment to the application with written rationale and a list of references.

The scientific justification for this project is not ready to inform decision making on this proposed early action. The scientific justification falls short in the areas of relevance, inclusiveness, objectivity, and peer review. The inclusiveness of all relevant information and analyses across relevant disciplines was not provided to the Delta Stewardship Council. A number of references apparently were provided to the California Department of Fish and Game Commission but were not provided to the Delta Stewardship Council.

Delta Stewardship Council Committee – Early Actions Review

Meeting Date: October 11th and 12th

Early Action Project or Plan Review: Staff Recommendation

Much of the science referenced in the application addresses the impact of striped bass on juvenile salmon and steelhead but there is no information provided on the likely effects of changed fishing regulations on the population of striped bass. There are a number of unanswered questions in this regard, for example: (1) What effect have more relaxed regulations had on striped bass populations and their consumption of other fishes in waters where these have been applied (some in California)? (2) What effect would removal of striped bass fishing regulations have on the population structure of striped bass? (3) How would the population of other predatory fish species (including native species) be affected by changes to the population of striped bass? Another issue is the quality of the references provided. Very few of the references provided are from peer reviewed journal, most fall into the category of expert opinion, several of which were commissioned directly by the applicant. It is not clear from the application how likely it is that the proposed early action, relaxation of striped bass fishing regulations, would have the desired effect, increased survival of juvenile salmon and steelhead.

List of Attachments

Attachment 1 – Application for Consideration of a Plan or Project

Contact

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